

In the Claims

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in this patent application:

Claims 1 to 9 (canceled).

10. (currently amended) An apparatus for providing a filling material, in paste form, for introduction into a canal of a tooth using a root-canal instrument including a screw which is arranged on a handpiece, comprising:

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at least one recess, and a for receiving a cartridge containing the filling material received in the recess, wherein the cartridge contains a dose of the filling material which approximately corresponds to an amount of the filling material which is needed to treat and fill one single canal; and

a heater coupled with the recess, wherein the heater operates to bring the dose of the filling material up to a desired temperature and to maintain the dose of the filling material at the desired temperature.

11. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 10 wherein the recess is formed in a heat-conducting element operatively associated with the heater.

12. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 11 wherein the heat-conducting element is a heat-conducting heating body, wherein the recess is formed in the heat-conducting heating body, and wherein the heater is a resistive electric element coupled with the heat-conducting heating body for heating the cartridge received in the recess of the heat-conducting heating body.

13. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 12 wherein a plurality of recesses are formed in the heat-conducting heating body, for receiving a plurality of cartridges.

14. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 13 wherein the plurality of recesses in the heat-conducting heating body are coupled with a single heater.

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15. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 12 wherein the cartridge is an elongate vessel having a longitudinal axis, and wherein the recess is shaped to receive the elongate vessel so that the longitudinal axis is in a substantially vertical orientation, thereby exposing an end of the elongate vessel for receiving the root-canal instrument.

16. (withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 11 wherein the heat-conducting element is a removable pot including the recess for receiving the cartridge.

17. (withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 16 wherein the pot comprises:

a central housing for accommodating the cartridge,
a body formed of a thermal mass and including the central housing; and

thermally insulated external surfaces including a first insulated surface surrounding the body of the pot and a second insulated surface extending over top portions of the pot.

18. (withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 17 wherein the thermal mass has an accessible bottom portion, and wherein the accessible bottom portion of the thermal mass has a female cavity for engaging the heater.

19. (withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 18 wherein the heater is a heating rod for engaging the female cavity of the thermal mass.

20. (withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 17 wherein the second insulated surface forms a lid on the pot, and wherein the second insulated surface has a circular shoulder which collaborates with a trigger for releasably engaging the pot.

21. (withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 20 which further includes a casing for receiving the pot, and wherein the trigger is coupled with the apparatus for articulation

relative to the casing.

22. (withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 21 wherein the trigger is coupled with the apparatus for articulation between a first position which completely closes off the casing when the pot is removed from the casing and a second position which is retracted from the first position to permit the pot to be inserted into and withdrawn from the casing.

23. (withdrawn - currently amended) The apparatus of claim 22 wherein the pot is releasably ~~releaseably~~ locked in the casing when the trigger is in the second position.

24. (withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 23 wherein the cartridge is received in the central housing of the pot.

25. (withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 21 wherein the trigger has a thickness allowing the trigger to be moved aside, by hand, against the pressure of the pot.

26. (currently amended) The apparatus of claim 10 wherein the root-canal instrument is a condenser, and wherein the condenser is received in the cartridge and in the filling material.

27. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 10 wherein the filling material is Gutta percha.

28. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 10 wherein the cartridge is a hollow vessel fitted with a sealed closure for establishing sterility of the vessel.

29. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 28 wherein the hollow vessel is a cylinder having an integral bottom at one end and the sealed closure at an opposite end.

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Cancel 30. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 28 wherein the vessel is formed of a plastic material, for establishing the sterility of the vessel.